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**1 – EPA approves 2 final greenhouse gas permits for planned \$1B resins plant in Corpus Christi, Daily Journal, 11/20/2014**

<http://www.dailyjournal.net/view/story/55df19ae33fc4591a4d067be589037df/TX--Resin-Plant-Corpus-Christi/> The Environmental Protection Agency has issued two final greenhouse gas permits for a planned \$1 billion resin processing plant in South Texas. The EPA on Wednesday announced the permits for M&G Resins USA for a facility in Corpus Christi.

**2 – Advocates assured Caddo Lake is oil-free, News Journal, 11/20/14**

[http://www.news-journal.com/news/local/advocates-assured-caddo-is-oil-free/article\\_6f0bea6f-85e0-5166-a9fc-3851ed2f7cf0.html](http://www.news-journal.com/news/local/advocates-assured-caddo-is-oil-free/article_6f0bea6f-85e0-5166-a9fc-3851ed2f7cf0.html)

Environmental officials from Louisiana and a company whose pipeline from Longview spilled 4,500 barrels of crude oil into a Caddo Lake tributary assured lake advocates Wednesday that the pollution never reached the two-state lake. About 50 members of the Caddo Lake Clearinghouse, a coalition of public and private organizations with a stake in the lake, also learned that giant salvinia is not alone among foreign plants invading the water.

**3 – Kilgore College to hire firm to test for asbestos, News Journal, 11/20/2014**

[http://www.news-journal.com/news/local/kilgore-college-to-hire-firm-to-test-for-asbestos/article\\_54394863-b10b-5189-a658-31aa185a5b6b.html](http://www.news-journal.com/news/local/kilgore-college-to-hire-firm-to-test-for-asbestos/article_54394863-b10b-5189-a658-31aa185a5b6b.html)

Even as the U.S. Senate considers a vote on building the controversial Keystone XL oil pipeline from Canada to the Kilgore College is working with a contractor to perform air quality tests in several buildings on campus following asbestos violation allegations from one of its employees, officials said Wednesday.

College spokesman Chris Craddock admitted Wednesday that the school has had its own unlicensed workers, including Maintenance Supervisor Rick Murphy, perform “very small” asbestos abatement procedures.

**4 – EPA In the Crosshairs as Oklahoma’s Inhofe Gains Sway Over Climate Policy, StateImpact, 11/20/14**

<http://stateimpact.npr.org/oklahoma/2014/11/20/epa-in-the-crosshairs-as-oklahomas-inhofe-gains-sway-over-climate-policy/>

The Republican wave that put the party back in full control of Congress also put Oklahoma U.S. Senator Jim Inhofe back in charge of the Senate committee that oversees the country’s environmental policies. The political shift in Washington comes at time when — from President Obama’s Clean Power Plan to enforcement of the Regional Haze Rule that’s riled Oklahoma officials — the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has a lot of things in the air.

**5 – Experts Meet in Oklahoma to Update U.S. Maps With Manmade Earthquake Hazards, State Impact, 11/19/2014**

<http://stateimpact.npr.org/oklahoma/2014/11/19/experts-meet-in-oklahoma-to-update-u-s-maps-with-manmade-earthquake-hazards/>

Scientists, regulators and technical experts from the energy industry met in Oklahoma to discuss how earthquakes triggered by oil and gas operations should be accounted for on national seismic hazard maps, which are used by the construction and insurance industries and public safety planners. The three-day workshop started Nov. 17 and was co-hosted by the Oklahoma Geological Survey and the U.S. Geological Survey.

**6 – Untapped, How graywater could be a conservation method for the masses. (But isn't.), Texas Observer, 11/19/2014**

<http://www.texasobserver.org/graywater-conservation-method-texas/>

Rodney Rash is the kind of guy who knows how to make something out of nothing. A former carpenter and electrician, Rash now works as a magician, constructing his own props and offering the plans for free online. He's plugging away at a book on how to build a home for \$35,000. But when he went to go construct a system to recycle water from his sinks, showers and washing machine at his home in Round Rock, Rash was stymied.

**7 – DuPont Tragedy One of Many Toxic Gas Releases, Texas Tribune, 11/20/2014**

<http://www.texastribune.org/2014/11/20/gas-killed-dupont-workers-not-rare-texas/>

A Saturday morning tragedy introduced Texans to an invisible killer. Methyl mercaptan, a foul-smelling gas, overwhelmed five workers at the DuPont chemical plant in La Porte on Nov. 15, killing four – including two brothers – and sending another to the hospital.

**8 – Report: EPA Power Plan Would Save Texas Water, Texas Tribune, 11/19/2014**

<http://www.texastribune.org/2014/11/19/report-epa-power-plan-would-save-water/>

As state regulators fret about how President Obama's effort to combat climate change would affect the Texas power grid, a new study says the rules would be simpler to adopt than those regulators suggest – and that it would save the state billions of gallons of water annually. In an analysis released Wednesday, CNA Corporation, a nonprofit research group based in Arlington, Va., said the federal proposal – which requires states to shift from coal power to cut carbon emissions – would slash water use in the Texas power sector by 21 percent.

**9 - Oklahoma State University to receive green power award, News OK, 11/20/2014**

<http://newsok.com/oklahoma-state-university-to-receive-green-power-award/article/5368378>

Oklahoma State University will receive a Green Power Leadership Award next month from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. OSU is being honored for its commitment to green power. The university's Stillwater campus got nearly three-quarters of its electricity from wind in 2013. It also has saved more than \$32 million since 2007 through a behavior-based energy conservation program across all five of its campuses.

**10 – New maps predict flood risk, Houma Today, 11/19/2014**

<http://www.houmatoday.com/article/20141119/ARTICLES/141119477/0/fast?tc=ar>

Parts of even northern Terrebonne and Lafourche parishes are not safe from flooding under the worst-case scenario storm, according to inundation maps the National Hurricane Center released last week. "You don't have to think very hard about it, just look at your location on the national map to find out if you are in an area at risk for storm surge from a future tropical storm or hurricane," said Brian Zachry, National Hurricane Center storm surge specialist.

**11- Contractor identified in Alcoa plant incident, Vitoria Advocate, 11/19/2014**

<http://www.victoriaadvocate.com/news/2014/nov/19/contractor-identified-in-alcoa-plant-incident/>

Jerry McClelland, 44, died from injuries he sustained while working at Alcoa's alumina manufacturing plant in Point Comfort on Tuesday. McClelland worked for Turner Industries' Beaumont office, said Rick Scardina, the company's chief administrative officer.

**12- CBS 11 I-Team Looks At What's In Your Water Tower, CBS 11, 11/19/2014**

<http://dfw.cbslocal.com/2014/11/19/water-towers/>

You most likely don't know Ron Perrin. But next time you pour a glass of tap water, you might consider giving him and his crew a toast. Why? Because they work to keep your water clean, as they don diving suits, strap on air masks, and jump into water towers across North Texas, scooping out bacterial sediment that sinks to the bottom of the tank after time.

**13 — Does Texas Need a Carbon Tax to Meet EPA Climate Rules?, Green Tech Media, 11/20/14**

<http://www.greentechmedia.com/articles/read/does-texas-need-a-carbon-tax-to-meet-epa-climate-rules>

The Texas grid has (mostly) kept the lights on despite having minimal reserve margins for years. But if ERCOT, which operates the state's grid, implements the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's proposed Clean Power Plan to cut carbon dioxide emissions, it will reduce grid reliability in the state even further, according to a new analysis from the council.

**14— Texas ranchers claim EPA's plan to redefine 'navigable waters' will hurt cattle industry, SE Texas Record, 11/19/2014**

<http://setexasrecord.com/news/299924-texas-ranchers-claim-epas-plan-to-redefine-navigable-waters-will-hurt-cattle-industry>

In a state where cattle is king, a ranchers' association is voicing its opposition to federal guidelines it says would hurt the cattle business. The Texas and Southwestern Cattle Raisers Association has sent a letter to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers objecting to the proposed definition of "Waters of the United States."



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## EPA approves 2 final greenhouse gas permits for planned \$1B resins plant in Corpus Christi

**AP**

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

First Posted: November 20, 2014 - 10:26 am

Last Updated: November 20, 2014 - 10:28 am

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CORPUS CHRISTI, Texas — The Environmental Protection Agency has issued two final greenhouse gas permits for a planned \$1 billion resin processing plant in South Texas.

The EPA on Wednesday announced the permits for M&G Resins USA for a facility in Corpus Christi.

The Corpus Christi Caller-Times (<http://bit.ly/1x4y371>) reports the Italian company plans to build a polyethylene terephthalate resin processing plant. The site involves about 410 acres along the shores of Nueces Bay.

M&G in 2011 announced plans for the chemical plant to manufacture resins used in plastics. Company officials have said the plant would involve about 3,000 construction jobs and creation of 250 permanent jobs.

The facility is scheduled to open in 2016.

Information from: Corpus Christi Caller-Times,  
<http://www.caller.com>

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# Advocates assured Caddo Lake is oil-free

By Glenn Evans [gevans@news-journal.com](mailto:gevans@news-journal.com) | Posted: Thursday, November 20, 2014 4:00 am

KARNACK — Environmental officials from Louisiana and a company whose pipeline from Longview spilled 4,500 barrels of crude oil into a Caddo Lake tributary assured lake advocates Wednesday that the pollution never reached the two-state lake.

About 50 members of the Caddo Lake Clearinghouse, a coalition of public and private organizations with a stake in the lake, also learned that giant salvinia is not alone among foreign plants invading the water.

Hyacinth and hydrilla, traditional invaders of many Texas reservoirs, have long been in Caddo Lake. Giant salvinia, perhaps the most sinister with its knack for blocking light while sucking up oxygen from the water, arrived around 2007.

The fight against that invasive plant continues, Caddo Lake National Wildlife Refuge Manager Jason Roesner and others reported.

“Here’s a new one,” Texas Parks and Wildlife District Supervisor Tim Bister said, as a picture of a crescent floating heart appeared on a slide presentation. “It’s a new one in the area. It’s a floating lily pad with a white flower. If you see it, if it’s a small group of floating plants that might have broken off. Pick it up, and give me a call.”

Bister also updated the crowd on another, relatively new, invader — the alligator weed.

The battle to push back the bright, green alligator weed, as with the giant salvinia, has recruited a natural predator.

Giant salvinia weevils appear to be keeping that plant in check, with a new weevil growing greenhouse at Shady Glade Resort an early success.

Bister said 3,500 flea beetles recently were released into the water to chew up alligator weed.

Earlier Wednesday, lake residents grilled Sunoco Logistics Partners workers and members of the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality about whether or not an Oct. 13 pipeline rupture near Mooringsport, Louisiana, had made it into the lake.

“This was a clean product that floated and was suitable for recovery,” Tom Killeen described the crude oil that escaped the 20-inch pipeline from Sunoco’s Longview facility.

Killeen, the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality’s administrator for compliance, also reported 450 animals, mostly crawfish, died in the spill.

“For the most part, the kill was pretty minor,” he said.

Killeen predicted Tete Bayou, the tributary emptying into Hawley's Arm on Caddo's southern shore in Louisiana, would be monitored another four or five months.

The Sunoco and Louisiana representatives repeated an Environmental Protection Agency specialist's statements this past week that slicks found in Hawley's Arm by environmentalists were biological, not petrochemical.

Sunoco official Russell Howerton said naturally occurring sheens such as the Oil Sands Blockade that environmentalists had reported do look similar to an oil slick on water. Howerton also said their report had prompted Sunoco, Louisiana and federal EPA officials to inspect the area in question.

"There was no oil anywhere in there," Howerton said. "That'll look like that — decaying leaf matter. It was a decomp(osition) sheen. ... It looks very similar, but it's not oil. It can trick you."

# Kilgore College to hire firm to test for asbestos

By Bridget Ortigo [bortigo@news-journal.com](mailto:bortigo@news-journal.com) | Posted: Thursday, November 20, 2014 4:00 am

Kilgore College is working with a contractor to perform air quality tests in several buildings on campus following asbestos violation allegations from one of its employees, officials said Wednesday.

College spokesman Chris Craddock admitted Wednesday that the school has had its own unlicensed workers, including Maintenance Supervisor Rick Murphy, perform “very small” asbestos abatement procedures.

“We’re working to hire ERI Consulting Inc. out of Tyler to reassure everybody since you ran the article in the newspaper,” Craddock told the News-Journal. “Dr. (Bill) Holda is having to hire them, for sure to test Dodson Auditorium and other buildings you named in the article.”

College Facilities Director Dalton Smith, a 14-year employee, said thousands of people have been exposed to improperly handled asbestos in the Randolph C. Watson Library, Rangerette gym, Stark Hall and the Quads dormitories and Dodson Auditorium. Smith and Kilgore College trustee Carlos “Scooter” Griffin each said they have been questioned by federal investigators.

“It’s going to cost \$2,020 just for Dodson Auditorium,” Craddock said.

College President Bill Holda said in an email Wednesday to the college’s faculty and staff that the allegations of a federal investigation are not true.

“The college has not been informed of, nor is it aware of any investigation, federal or otherwise, of asbestos violations on our campuses,” Holda wrote in the email.

Holda sent a separate email to Kilgore College trustees just before 9 p.m. Tuesday in which he wrote that two board members and a college employee had been interviewed by federal investigators regarding asbestos violations. That email was obtained by the News-Journal from an anonymous source.

“Two of our board members, Brian Nutt and Carlos Griffin, notified James Walker and Will Roberson



Kilgore College Dodson Auditorium

The ceiling of the sound room of Kilgore College’s Dodson Auditorium, shown Saturday, has what Facilities Director Dalton Smith said is high concentrations of asbestos. This area is open to the college’s workers.

that they were interviewed in a criminal investigation into asbestos issues related to the removal of the house in Longview,” Holda wrote in the email to trustees. “One of our employees, Dalton Smith, said he was interviewed by individuals who identified themselves as agents for the FBI and EPA.”

Holda also said in that email that the college is unaware of a federal investigation.

“Kilgore College has not been formally or informally contacted by any agency,” he wrote. “Despite not being informed of the investigation, nor being provided the name or contact information for any purported officer nor the case number, we have tried to reach out to the Dallas office of the EPA and FBI and the Texas Department of State Health Services to state our willingness to cooperate with any authorized investigation.”

Smith said he went earlier this month to federal investigators to inform them of what he called the college administration’s years-long effort to cover up the situation, apparently to save time and avoid costly and lengthy abatement procedures.

Smith made the situation public, he said, after being ordered by his supervisor, Director of Special Projects Dan Beach, to cover up the carcinogenic material’s existence over the past few years.

Craddock said Wednesday he has tried to reach out to Smith, but has not received a response.

With regard to Smith’s claims that unlicensed Kilgore College employees have performed asbestos abatement in college buildings, including Dodson Auditorium, Craddock said the employees do not need a license to perform what he called “very small” asbestos abatement procedures.

“Dan Beach said there are three levels of abatements, and for the bottom level, Rick (Murphy) didn’t have to be licensed,” Craddock said. “I don’t know what defines a small job, but Dan Beach does.”

Smith said Wednesday he wouldn’t classify the abatements as “very small.”

“One was about a 14-foot-by-14-foot area,” Smith said. “It wasn’t done right. Why put people at risk for nothing? It should have been those people’s choice at the auditorium that day if they wanted to be put at risk, not the administration’s. It’s not in my job requirement to put people at risk.”

The News-Journal filed an open records request with Kilgore College late Wednesday seeking all records pertaining to asbestos abatements performed by licensed and non-licensed entities since 1997, air quality test records performed on college property since 1997, a listing of all employees who have undergone asbestos abatement training since 1997 and a description and definition of each level of asbestos abatement and the legal requirements related to each level.

In 1997, the college had an asbestos survey performed by ERI Consulting. It showed several areas of asbestos throughout Dodson Auditorium and elsewhere on campus.

“We’ve spent millions upon millions of dollars on asbestos abatements and treatments,” Craddock

said.

Smith said it doesn't matter how many legal abatements are done if there also are smaller abatements done improperly that put people at risk.

"My people didn't have the right gear, and we didn't dispose of it in a licensed facility, and we didn't notify them it was asbestos for them to protect the people," he said. "That's all against the law."

Smith said training is required of workers who perform asbestos abatements, and he said none of the employees have had the proper training.

"Terry Huckaby is our safety guy, and his only training is a two-day seminar on campus shooter safety, EPA peer audit training to learn how to do audits at other colleges and hazmat to pick up chemicals," Smith said. "Rick Murphy hasn't been to any training in at least 15 years."

Craddock said he was unsure of the training obtained by Murphy or Huckaby and referred those questions to Beach, who did not return calls for comment.

A representative from the Texas Department of State Health Services also did not respond Wednesday to a request for training requirements and proper procedures for the different level of asbestos treatments.

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AUDIO

# EPA In the Crosshairs as Oklahoma's Inhofe Gains Sway Over Climate Policy

NOVEMBER 20, 2014 | 6:00 AM

BY [LOGAN LAYDEN](#)



ANDREW REVKIN / FLICKR

Oklahoma U.S. Senator James Inhofe at an impromptu news conference during climate talks in Copenhagen in 2009.

The Republican wave that put the party back in full control of Congress also put Oklahoma U.S. Senator Jim Inhofe back in charge of the [Senate committee](#) that oversees the country's environmental policies.

The political shift in Washington comes at time when — from President Obama's [Clean Power Plan](#) to enforcement of the Regional Haze Rule that's [riled Oklahoma officials](#) — the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has a lot of things in the air.

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Election night was a rough one in general for the left, but some of the tears spilled on November 4<sup>th</sup> were over the specific issue of climate change, and what a fully Republican controlled Congress might do to thwart President Obama's environmental efforts.

From [MSNBC's Alex Wagner](#):

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*That is because when voters elected Republicans to a majority of both chambers of Congress, they effectively put Oklahoma Senator and longtime climate change denier James Inhofe in charge of the Senate's climate policy.*

And it's statements like this one Inhofe made to StateImpact that worry anyone concerned about climate change:

"Our air is the cleanest it's ever been. And now they're pushing for these regulations, but the thing is, it's not something you can look at cost/benefit of... Our air is already clean," Inhofe says.

The EPA has the power to make environmental rules, so what, if anything, can Inhofe do to derail Obama's plan to cut carbon emissions at coal plants, or the regional haze rule that's meant to clear the air at national parks for example?

"Well, there are a lot of different things they can try. It's unclear how successful they'll be," Jack Lienke with the [Institute for Policy Integrity](#) at the New York University School of Law says.

Lienke says there are four ways Congress can obstruct EPA rules.

"One thing that Senator Inhofe — as chair of the Environment and Public Works Committee in the Senate — and that other Republican leaders will get is oversight authority," Lienke says. "So this is the ability to hold hearings, to issue document requests, to call witnesses."

That won't impact the EPA rules themselves, but burying the agency in hearings can slow them down and shine a spotlight on them. Lienke expects that tactic to be used a lot.

To overturn an existing rule, like regional haze or the mercury and air toxics standards, would require Congress to do something it has recently seemed incapable of doing, actually pass legislation.

The problem is the filibuster. Inhofe would need 60 votes in the Senate to end debate and force a vote. The third option is what's called the [Congressional Review Act](#), which allows Congress to nix a new rule within two months of it being finalized. Inhofe says that's the best option for stopping newly finalized rules, like the [carbon emission limits](#) coming in June 2015.

"I will be introducing it on that day with 30 co-sponsors — you have to have 30 senators join you and I already have that," Inhofe says. "Then it will go to just a straight up or down majority vote, not a supermajority, just 51 votes in the Senate."

That gets Inhofe around the filibuster, but then there's President Obama's veto power, which he'd likely use to protect the cornerstone of his administration's climate change policy. But Inhofe thinks he can get around that obstacle too.

"All these Democrats — I went back this week and talked to a bunch of them who lost their jobs," Inhofe says. "They all, to the last one, blame Obama. So a lot of these guys that are coming ... into cycle where they have to run for reelection in 2016, they're going to be racing to override vetoes to separate themselves from the president."

The final option would be to attach amendments to big, important spending bills that block funding for enforcement of EPA rules. Inhofe says he supports that effort, but only to a point. Right now he's not willing to shut down the government over it, according to an email from an Inhofe spokesperson to StateImpact.

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## Experts Meet in Oklahoma to Update U.S. Maps With Manmade Earthquake Hazards

NOVEMBER 19, 2014 | 4:41 PM

BY [JOE WERTZ](#)

JOE WERTZ / STATEIMPACT OKLAHOMA

A panel of state geological surveys and oil and gas regulators at the National Seismic Hazard Workshop on Induced Seismicity, held in November at a conference center in Midwest City, Okla.

Scientists, regulators and technical experts from the energy industry met in Oklahoma to discuss how earthquakes triggered by oil and gas operations should be accounted for on national seismic hazard maps, which are used by the construction and insurance industries and public safety planners.

The three-day workshop started Nov. 17 and was co-hosted by the Oklahoma Geological Survey and the U.S. Geological Survey.

Currently, the **National Seismic Hazard Maps** don't include "non-tectonic" earthquakes, like those that could be triggered by disposal wells or hydraulic fracturing. Through the workshop, federal seismologists solicited input on how manmade quakes should be accounted for on national hazard models.

Earthquake activity is surging in Oklahoma. More than 450 magnitude-3.0 or greater earthquakes have shaken the state in 2014, four times as many as last year and a new state record.

Peer-reviewed papers in scientific journals have concluded many of Oklahoma's earthquakes are likely linked to a type of well the energy industry pumps full of waste fluid from oil and gas drilling. There's still disagreement about the scope and scale of the

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connection, but most earthquake researchers agree that disposal wells are a contributing factor in at least some of the earthquakes.

The USGS updates its National Seismic Hazard Maps every six years to include the latest information on earthquake activity, faults and earth measurements. The maps and **hazard models** have wide government and commercial applications and influence local emergency response, insurance rates and building codes.

“Part of the reason we make these is really for the engineering community,” says Justin Rubinstein, a USGS geophysicist stationed in Menlo Park, Calif., who’s studying induced earthquakes. “It’s for designing buildings.”

For engineers and those interested in the risk earthquakes pose to the public and buildings, “it doesn’t matter how big an earthquake is, it all is dependent on the shaking from that earthquake.”

“If you have a magnitude-9.0 that’s 200 kilometers deep, that doesn’t matter nearly as much as a magnitude-6.0 that’s right underneath you,” Rubinstein says.

Earthquake magnitudes are a piece of the puzzle, but the type of earthquake and where it occurs, geologically and geographically, greatly effect the amount of ground shaking a quake generates. Shaking from earthquakes that strike in the western United States, for example, often dissipate more quickly than quakes that strike in Oklahoma and states throughout the central part of the country, Rubinstein says.

Tuesday’s workshop session included presentations from many scientists at the forefront of induced earthquake research, including Bill Ellsworth and Art McGarr with the USGS and Mark Zoback from Stanford University, as well as panel discussions that included state seismologists and oil and gas regulators from Arkansas, Colorado and Kansas — all states that have recorded quakes suspected of being linked to oil and gas activity.

In the past, manmade earthquakes were excluded from the national maps and models because scientists didn’t think they posed a significant hazard. Rubinstein says the large earthquake uptick in Oklahoma and other states — which has included temblors that have damaged buildings and caused injuries — creates an urgent need to assess hazard posed by induced earthquakes.

“With the big increase in the earthquake rate and the occurrence of some damaging induced earthquakes, we realized that we can no longer neglect these earthquakes,” he says.

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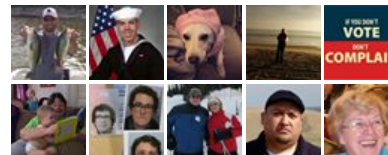
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## Untapped

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How graywater could be a conservation method for the masses. (But isn't.)

by [Fauzeva Rahman](#) Published on Wednesday, November 19, 2014, at 10:13 CST



Jen Reel

The treatment tank for a permitted graywater system in East Austin.

**Rodney Rash is the kind of guy** who knows how to make something out of nothing. A former carpenter and electrician, Rash now works as a magician, constructing his own props and offering the plans for free online. He's plugging away at a book on how to build a home for \$35,000. But when he went to go construct a system to recycle water from his sinks, showers and washing machine at his home in Round Rock, Rash was stymied.

After researching and coming up with a basic plan for his graywater project, he called the city to find out how to get it permitted.

"They basically told me that I couldn't do that," he said. "Specifically, they said I couldn't have a permitted graywater system and that these systems were very uncommon throughout Texas, but I could have a rain barrel. If you're trucking in water from other areas to meet demand, why waste all this perfectly good water?"

Round Rock is far from unusual. Despite persistent drought across much of Texas, most cities do nothing to promote graywater reuse as a conservation method, letting billions of gallons of usable water go down the drain and on to expensive and energy-intensive sewage treatment plants. Even for committed conservationists and tinkerers, Texas government, which is not known for over-regulation, often stands in the way.

Every time you take a shower, use the bathroom sink or run a load of laundry, the resulting graywater—as distinct from "blackwater," which has come into contact with human waste—could be diverted to water your lawn or irrigate a tree. A





typical household produces 100 gallons of usable graywater per day, enough to replace 10 to 25 percent of potable water use on an average landscape, according to the Texas A&M AgriLife Research and Extension Center. A statewide effort to retrofit homes with graywater systems could yield savings of up to 390,000 acre-feet of water per year, according to the Texas Water Resources Institute. That's enough water to supply 130,000 typical households.

**“A lot of people think graywater is filthy, that because we’ve used it we need to get rid of it.”**

Despite the potential savings, most Texas cities are doing very little to encourage graywater use and often have regulations that make it difficult for even highly motivated people to install graywater systems. I reached five of the cities in the thick of Texas’ drought—Austin, El Paso, Round Rock, San Antonio and Wichita Falls—and not one offered incentives or rebates for graywater systems or even programs to educate citizens. In El Paso, the city water utility initially said it discouraged graywater use because of public health concerns. In Austin, the water utility requires people to get a permit

even for simple washing-machine-to-landscape applications. In those five cities, we found that only three households had obtained permits for larger-scale systems that require plumbing changes. All three are in Austin.

Without formal programs and public education, enthusiasts are left to navigate regulations on their own or ignore the rules altogether.

Graywater advocates say a teachable moment—with many people attuned to conservation ideas amid a devastating drought—is being wasted, along with potential cash and water savings.

“Graywater has the potential to step in in a place where reuse and reclaim does not,” said Lauren Ross, an environmental engineer and owner of Glenrose Engineering in Austin. “A lot of us have a rainwater cache, and when we’re in a deep drought, these tanks are empty. Graywater is a source of water that’s local, right here in my house. It generates the same amount whether it’s raining or not, and can be reused in any weather condition. It doesn’t require huge amounts of energy or expensive infrastructure, but it does require maintenance.”

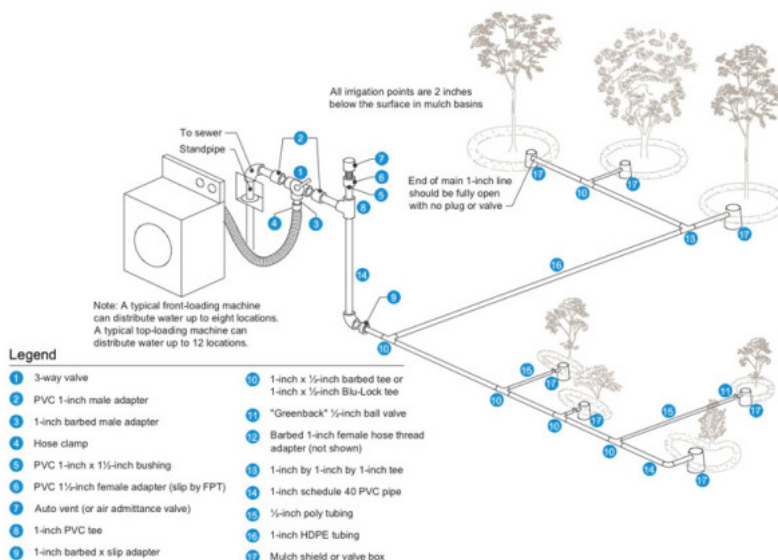


Figure 3. Laundry-to-landscape overview. Source: Clean Water Components.

San Francisco Public Utilities Commission

Credit: City of San Francisco

**\*\*Click on the image below to enlarge.\*\***

Before 2003, Texas didn't generally allow residents to collect or reuse graywater, mainly due to concerns that using it on landscapes could pose serious risks to public health—fears that have been largely laid to rest by recent science, experts say. Most cities in Texas didn't formally introduce graywater regulations until recently. Austin, which has put the most thought into the issue, only made graywater use legal in 2010. A graywater stakeholder committee, which included professionals such as Ross and other engineers, worked with city officials to develop less onerous rules.

Austin requires permits for all graywater systems, including a relatively simple laundry-to-landscape system, which typically involves running your washing machine discharge to some turf or a tree.

“We’ve been quite progressive as a whole with the adoption of this code, in particular, with the laundry to landscape,” said Austin Water Utility spokesman Robert Stefani. “It’s a great place to start, and we think it will smooth the adoption curve a bit. Instead of forcing the public into these big systems, we’ve given the public something easy to use and cheap to install.”

But the adoption rate is still very low. Currently, there are three permitted graywater systems in Austin.

Ross says the permitting process is still “more difficult than it needs to be for residential graywater systems.” She adds that lingering water quality concerns are overblown and date back to a time when drinking water and wastewater commingled, leading to typhoid and cholera outbreaks.

"There are no recorded instances of anybody ever contracting a waterborne disease from a graywater system, permitted or unpermitted," Ross said. "The city is confusingly cautious about why they want these excessive standards for graywater systems that don't apply to things that are as much of a threat as graywater, such as a kiddie pool."

Austin, with its "excessive" standards, is still ahead of the rest of the state, but with no guidance, few bothered to navigate the rules.

**A few years ago, environmental engineer Rebecca Batchelder** set out to get her home graywater system permitted. As an engineer, she could draft her own plans, which came in handy.

"When I went to pull my permit, the permit officer had to ask me what graywater was, so you can imagine how it went from there," she said. "The folks there were very helpful, they just had no defined process."

Four years later, graywater regulations have been updated but only two more homes have gone through the permitting process. For Batchelder, this doesn't come as a surprise.



Katherine Jashinski

The home is replumbed to drain water from a sink, a bathtub and a washing machine to a treatment tank outside.



Katherine Jashinski

Perforated PVC is buried beneath the surface to sub-irrigate a garden with graywater.

"Graywater is tricky. The permitting is still probably more difficult than it should be and it usually requires cutting into your plumbing, which is scary for homeowners," she said. "There aren't rebates, and water is still too cheap for it to be worth it to most people. Plus, from the homeowner's perspective, why get a permit? That just adds to the cost."

In San Francisco, laundry-to-landscape projects don't require permits and the city offers an [extensive guide](#) available online with detailed instructions on how to get started.

Cheryl Hodges is an example of a graywater enthusiast who went the DIY route, rules be damned. She asked that her name be changed since her system isn't permitted. She lives in an unincorporated area of Hays County and operates what she calls a "gypsy graywater system."

"I take water from bathtubs, showers and sinks and put it on the landscape outside our house. It's not a superbly piped system," she said. "The system is somewhat informal, but it's very much a system with real data. When I moved in the late '90s, the house was already built, so a lot of this is retrofitted. I had to make do with what already existed."

Hodges' 800-square-foot home is on a hill, and she can irrigate the downhill portion of her landscape, which totals about a quarter-acre and includes pear and citrus trees, with graywater. However, she admits that maintaining a graywater system requires some vigilance.

"We have directions in the bathroom and are very strict on what soaps we use," she said. "Even as an English major, I have to pay attention to the chemistry. What are you using for dish soap? Are you washing your hair with something that has three different kinds of sulfate?"

While Hodges is current on the science behind her system, chances are there are less knowledgeable people who could benefit from city guidance. However, my search for graywater resources in cities throughout drought-stricken Texas came up mostly dry.

In the desert city of El Paso, graywater has few fans at the city water utility. When the *Observer* first reached out to El Paso Water Utilities, a spokesperson informed us that graywater wasn't part of their conservation efforts because of "water quality concerns."

Soon after talking, Montoya called back to clarify: The city of El Paso does allow for graywater systems that adhere to city regulations. Customers need to submit drawings and an application to be considered. So far, according to an engineer with the city, there aren't any permitted or unpermitted systems in the city, along with no plans to promote graywater use as a conservation method.

"One of the challenges with graywater is that it puts people in charge of their own water quality instead of the city,"

Christina Montoya said.

But that's not the view of those who study the issue.

"A lot of people think graywater is filthy, that because we've used it we need to get rid of it," said Mike Martin, manager with the Texas A&M Energy Institute. "There are some constraints you have to follow and you have to think smart, but it's perfectly OK to use."

To show graywater's potential value, the institute has been conducting a yearlong study looking at the effects of graywater on native plants. Researchers found that native plants not only tolerated the water, but "thrived," according to Martin.

Wichita Falls, where rainfall is almost four feet below normal, is facing some of the most severe drought in the state. The city's two drinking-water lakes are 22 percent full, the lowest levels since the mid-1950s.

The city mentions graywater on its website, but doesn't provide any information on how to harvest it. Wichita Falls requires a permit for a system that necessitates plumbing work, but not for simply diverting water from a washing machine to a lawn—a much cheaper and low-tech alternative.

Bobby Teague, assistant director with the city, said that he hasn't received any permit requests for an engineered system, but "hundreds, if not thousands, are diverting water via a bucket or some other way. They are filling up buckets while the shower is getting hot and carrying it to the trees, foundation or shrubs. It's as simple as that."

While graywater is at least considered a conservation method in Wichita Falls, there isn't much in the way of education or implementation support for residents.

The same goes for San Antonio, another drought-stressed city going to greater and greater lengths to scare up water supplies.

While San Antonio doesn't prevent people from setting up systems it's also not actively promoting graywater through rebates, which are provided for other water-saving appliances, such as low-flow shower heads or toilets.

"In the city of San Antonio, graywater is a pretty uncommon practice," said Karen Guz, conservation director of the San Antonio Water System. "But, if you wanted to take washing machine water and apply it instead of sending it down the drain, probably no one would bother you as long as it's not a nuisance and there aren't any complaints of smells or mosquitos. There has to be a place to send graywater."

Guz stressed that even if a graywater system was collecting water from all possible sources (showers, sinks, washing machine, etc) it still wouldn't produce enough volume to operate an automatic sprinkler system. However, graywater isn't seen as a complete solution for all landscape irrigation needs by most enthusiasts; Rather it's most useful to water a portion of a yard or specific trees. Batchelder's advice to homeowners looking to set up a system: keep it simple.



Lauren Ross, environmental engineer and owner of Glenrose Engineering, in her home office.

"I've installed two permitted graywater systems, one in Austin and one in Los Angeles. Both were very labor intensive to install and prone to issues. Now, I just put my washing machine hose in a pipe that leads to my persimmon tree, or I move it to another part of the garden that is in need. The system cost me around 5 bucks, took me about 30 seconds to set up and it works beautifully."

"The cities and water utilities are way, way behind the public on this issue," said Ross of Glenrose Engineering. "I don't necessarily think people need a permit, but I'm not opposed either. As long as it's something that encourages people to do it and is most beneficial, as opposed to a permit system that just doesn't make any sense at all."

If drought forecasts remain the same, Texas cities may turn to graywater as another way to squeeze more out of

diminishing water resources.

"There are a lot of people moving to Texas, rainfall amounts aren't increasing and we know drought predictions for the next 15 to 20 years," Martin with the Texas A&M Energy Institute said. "I think conservation is the best way to save, and if we conserve our potable water source, we need to do that at the home."

*Tags: Austin, conservation, Drought, El Paso, graywater, Hays County, San Antonio, wichita falls*

**"I just put my washing machine hose in a pipe that leads to my persimmon tree, or I move it to another part of the garden that is in need. The system cost me around 5 bucks, took me about 30 seconds to set up and it works beautifully."**





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by [Neena Satija](#), [Jim Malewitz](#) and [Marcos Vanetta](#) | Nov. 20, 2014  
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Texas Chemical Council Statement to Texas Tribune  
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15, killing four – including two brothers – and sending another to the hospital.

Such rapid deaths from toxic chemical exposure are rare, experts say.

But dozens of times in the past two years, a Texas Tribune

A Saturday morning tragedy introduced Texans to an invisible killer.

Methyl mercaptan, a foul-smelling gas, overwhelmed five workers at the DuPont chemical plant in La Porte on Nov.

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#### For West Texas Job-Seekers, the Options are Endless

by [Justin Johnson](#) and [Tamir Kalifa](#)

analysis shows, plants across Texas have reported accidentally releasing gases that can be deadly in relatively small amounts.

Thousands – and even millions – of pounds of toxic chemicals beyond what permits allow have spewed from facilities. While companies considered many of those events “close calls” that prompted evacuations at worst, some triggered deadly explosions that, in turn, caused even more gas to be released.



“The bounty that we get from all this business has got kind of a dark side,” said Rock Owens, an environmental attorney for Harris County, home to the Houston Ship Channel, whose oil refineries make up 12 percent of the nation’s refining capacity. “We have a very high concentration of dangerous industry here, and I don’t think the state has the resources to address it.”

The Tribune analyzed an Texas Commission on Environmental Quality inventory of chemical releases higher than what the law allows. The data relies on industry reporting.

Since 2009, Texas chemical manufacturers have reported at least 19 other unauthorized releases of methyl mercaptan, the analysis found. Methyl mercaptan can cause nausea, vomiting and fluid buildup in the lungs. Its rotten-egg smell wafted over La Porte for at least 24 hours, but county health experts said the leak posed little risk to the community because even trace amounts carry the smell.

DuPont’s was the only methyl mercaptan release that killed or injured workers in the past five years, according to state and federal data. The gas, however, is among hundreds of dangerous chemicals plants spew across Texas.

“There are a lot of compounds where you wouldn’t necessarily have four or five people die, but that doesn’t mean that those releases aren’t harmful,” said Elena Craft, a health scientist who specializes in air pollution at the Environmental Defense Fund, an advocacy group. “We need to limit these massive amounts of release. I mean, they’re highly toxic compounds.”

Industry officials say Texas plants have grown safer in recent decades as companies pour millions of dollars into training and protective gear. They say the toxic releases need context. After

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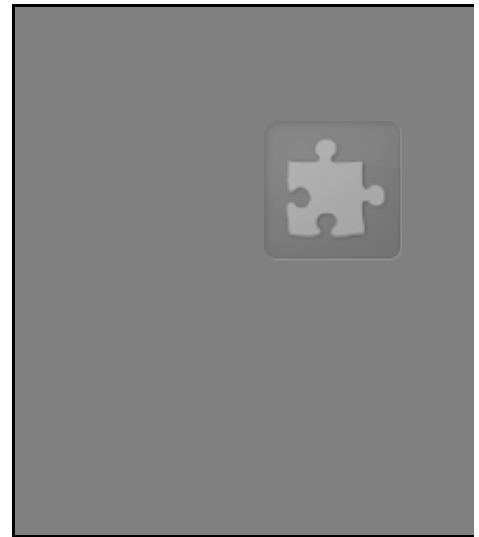
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all, Texas is huge – and so are its chemical manufacturers.

“Our industry takes every process safety incident very seriously,” Hector Rivero, president and CEO of the Texas Chemical Council, said in a page-long statement that offered “deepest sympathies,” to those affected by the DuPont leak. He also said the industry’s record is improving on several safety measures, but did not provide a source for the data.

Alex Cuculis, a researcher in Houston who used to work for Shell, agreed. “I think most petrochem workers, myself included, felt that we were much more likely to be killed in an accident driving to work than from a plant explosion,” Cuculis said. “I think the stats support that pretty well.”



**Texas A&M #1 in Texas**

Still, critics worry safety culture at plants can shrivel after just a few months of smooth operations and “near misses.” The results, they say, can mirror what happened at DuPont.

“You’ll have a company who will have a good run, but then something like this will happen,” said Robert Morse, a Houston lawyer who has represented both plaintiffs and defendants in industrial accident cases. “It’s been my experience that DuPont probably runs a better shop than most companies, but they clearly dropped the ball here.”

Texas’ hands-off regulatory philosophy doesn’t help, Morse and others say.

“The penalty structure here for an event like this – depending on how many violations you can carve out of a horrible incident like this – would range from \$50 per day per violation to \$2,500 per day per violation,” Owens said. “If you’re a major company, that’s not even as significant as a parking ticket is to deal with for a normal household.”

In the past two years, several industrial plants reported dozens of unauthorized releases of hydrogen cyanide, a chemical that interferes with organs’ oxygen use and is **deadly** in high concentrations. And in at least 10 instances, plants released 65 pounds or more of the gas.

That was **enough** to send six workers to the hospital after an

industrial plant leak on Texas' Gulf Coast last February. In that case, Alvin-based Ascend Performance Materials, a producer of carpet and textile fibers, reported a venting issue that [released](#) 65 pounds of hydrogen cyanide. That prompted a “shelter in place order,” and the hospitalizations, according to a federal [incident report](#). The Occupational Safety and Health Administration [fined](#) Ascend \$37,000, which the company is appealing.

Not all information on TCEQ enforcement is readily available, but agency records show that Ascend [paid](#) the agency a \$6,120 for leaking 178 pounds of hydrogen cyanide in 2011 — three years before six workers were hospitalized. The company told regulators it had replaced some electrical equipment and started a maintenance inspection program.

In 2012, Invista, an Orange County fiber producer, [released](#) at least 14 pounds of hydrogen cyanide from a leaky valve. That prompted an evacuation and sent one person to the hospital, federal [reports](#) show. About a year later, workers fled the plant after [another](#) such leak. A few months after that, regulators [fined](#) the company \$5,251 for the 2012 incident and asked for an additional \$5,000 that would go toward a state energy efficiency program.

When it comes to leaks of toxic chemicals like volatile organic compounds — which can cause cancer due to long-term exposure or cause dizziness, throat and eye irritation, or other impacts upon short-term exposure — hospitalizations are less likely. But they have happened in at least a few instances, federal data show.

In May, loose bolts on a gasoline pump suction strainer at a BASF chemical manufacturing plant in Port Arthur [released](#) a number of different volatile organic compounds, or toxic chemicals that also contribute to ozone pollution, the company reported. A federal incident report shows that [one person](#) went to the hospital. Acute short-term exposure to one of the compounds, [toluene](#), can affect the central nervous system. The plant also released [benzene](#), a known carcinogen and occupational hazard.

Those weren't the first such releases at the plant. In the two years prior to that incident, BASF reported unauthorized emissions of benzene and other volatile organic compounds at least five other times. That included [one release](#) of more than 1,500 pounds of benzene in August 2013 after pressure gauges

rupture and caused a leak. It [appears](#) that the TCEQ fined the company for such emissions around that time, but specific records were not immediately available.

In one of the larger events reported in recent years, Shell Oil's Deer Park refinery [released](#) close to 40,000 pounds of benzene in January 2013. Along with other volatile organic compounds, the substance vented out of an improperly operated valve for 15 days before a plant worker noticed. It [paid](#) the TCEQ \$200,000 for that and other related emissions violations, along with contributing money to a Houston-area air-monitoring project.

Repeated events like that one impact public health, Craft said.

"You've got folks that are getting routine exposure to benzene, and after some certain number of years there's a chance they're going to end up with cancer," she said. "It all adds up."

For their part, Texas regulators say they swiftly respond to chemical leaks – within their power.

“In emergency response events, TCEQ’s role is to rapidly provide personnel, expertise, and equipment, as necessary, to assess the extent of public exposure to hazardous materials, such as monitoring offsite air quality,” Terry Clawson, a TCEQ spokesman, said in an email.

Clawson added that this past year, the agency found that 98 percent of all facilities that emit air pollutants that it inspected were in compliance.

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# Report: EPA Power Plan Would Save Texas Water

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As state regulators fret about how President Obama's effort to combat climate change would affect the Texas power grid, a new study says the

rules would be simpler to adopt than those regulators suggest – and that it would save the state billions of gallons of water annually.

In an [analysis released Wednesday](#), CNA Corporation, a nonprofit research group based in Arlington, Va., said the federal proposal – which requires states to shift from coal power to cut carbon emissions – would slash water use in the Texas power sector by 21 percent. That would save the drought-ridden state more than 28 billion gallons of water each year.

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“It’s a surprising finding,” Paul Faeth, the report’s author, said in a statement. “People don’t often associate water conservation with [carbon] cuts, but for Texas, they work together.”

The federal proposal [would require Texas power plants to slash emissions](#) by as much as 195 billion pounds of carbon dioxide in the next 18 years, according to a [Texas Tribune analysis](#). That 43 percent reduction is among the largest percentage of cuts required among states.

The state’s Republican leadership has [loudly panned the proposal](#) and is expected to sue once it becomes final. But behind the scenes, state regulators are examining how Texas might meet its carbon target.



The EPA suggests that Texas could meet its goal though a combination of actions: making coal plants more efficient, switching to cleaner-burning natural gas, adding more renewable resources and bolstering energy efficiency. Texas would have until 2016 to submit a plan to meet its carbon target.

CNA Corporation's analysis comes two days after the Electric Reliability Council of Texas (ERCOT), the state’s grid operator, [said the proposal would threaten reliability](#) and raise energy costs by as much as 20 percent by 2020 – not including the cost of new power lines needed to keep the grid running.

The CNA report, which relied on a model ERCOT has used in the past, said shifting away from water-guzzling coal power plants and boosting energy efficiency would ease Texas’ water woes.

Compared to Texas' grid operator, CNA painted a rosier picture of price and reliability effects. With big investments in natural gas and wind power, Texas is already on pace to meet 70 percent of its target by 2029, according to the study. Improving energy efficiency could move the state the rest of the way.

The federal proposal would increase the per-megawatt cost of electricity by 5 percent by 2029, but cut total system costs by 2 percent, the group said.

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## The Brief: Van de Putte Will Pursue Mayoral Bid

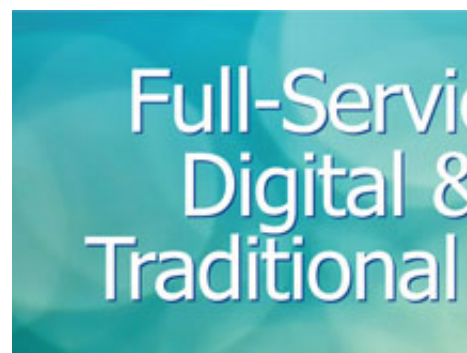
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“We find that the state will be able to meet the final and interim targets with modest incremental effort,” the study said.

Texas regulators are preparing to file formal comments to the EPA ahead of the Dec. 1 public comment deadline.



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# Oklahoma State University to receive green power award

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency will honor Oklahoma State University next month for its commitment to green power.

FROM STAFF REPORTS • Published: November 20, 2014

STILLWATER — Oklahoma State University will receive a Green Power Leadership Award next month from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

OSU is being honored for its commitment to green power. The university's Stillwater campus got nearly three-quarters of its electricity from wind in 2013. It also has saved more than \$32 million since 2007 through a behavior-based energy conservation program across all five of its campuses.

"As one of the nation's leading land-grant universities, OSU is committed to sustainability in our practices, education, research and outreach," OSU President Burns Hargis said in a news release. "We are nurturing a culture of respect for, and commitment to, sustainable practices and environmental stewardship with our students that will extend beyond our campuses."

"We are honored to receive this distinction and will continue to expand the use of green power to improve our campuses and our world."

OSU will be recognized Dec. 3 at the 2014 Renewable Energy Markets Conference in Sacramento.

It is one of four organizations, and the only school, to be chosen as a Green Power Partner of the Year for leadership, overall strategy and impact on the green power market.

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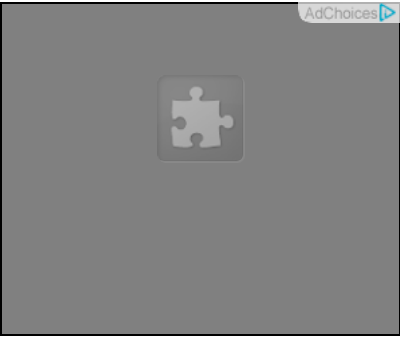
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MORE FROM NEWSOK

## New maps predict flood risk

By [Xerxes Wilson](#)

Staff Writer

Published: Wednesday, November 19, 2014 at 7:12 p.m.

Parts of even northern Terrebonne and Lafourche parishes are not safe from flooding under the worst-case scenario storm, according to inundation maps the National Hurricane Center released last week.

"You don't have to think very hard about it, just look at your location on the national map to find out if you are in an area at risk for storm surge from a future tropical storm or hurricane," said Brian Zachry, National Hurricane Center storm surge specialist.

For Terrebonne, the maps show a worst-case trajectory Category 2 storm inundating populated areas of Houma with more than three feet of water, populated parts of the north parish along La. 311 and La. 24 with more than three feet of water and up to three feet of water along the highway ridges.

Flooding from storm surge depends on many factors, such as the track, intensity, size and forward speed of the hurricane, besides the characteristics of the coastline where it comes ashore or passes nearby.

The maps simulate tens of thousands of hypothetical hurricanes for 27 basins along the East and Gulf coasts. Illustrations of the worst-possible surges are depicted for Category 1-5 storms.

The high-resolution maps are not perfect in the difficult task of predicting storm surge interaction with Terrebonne's still spotty levee systems.

"They don't include any recent improvements done, so they are not accurate," said Terrebonne Levee District Director Reggie Dupre. "They don't show true risk. The recent flood protection improvements would have made a substantial difference."

Terrebonne is working to close gaps in levee construction across the bottom of the Lake Boudreaux basin where surge has previously entered into lower bayou communities.

The levees being built are the footprint of the Morganza-to-the-Gulf levee system, though gaps between the Houma Navigation Canal and Bayou Little Cailou remain. West of the canal is also void of any levees.

Dupre said the worst-case scenario would be a Katrina-type hurricane hitting just west of Terrebonne Parish at Morgan City.

The maps do not show a flood risk for the leveed-in system of south Lafourche or New Orleans.

In north Lafourche, the maps show populated areas along La. 1 and La. 308 could be flooded with more than three feet of water in the worst-case Category 2 storm.

Chackbay could be inundated with nine feet of water in the worst case Category 2 storms. Thibodaux could see up to three feet of water in such a storm.

North Lafourche Levee District Director Dwayne Bourgeois said it's important to consider that the maps only show risks to certain points for certain storms and do not depict risk for one storm throughout the area.

“People don't understand the risk that is right under them,” Bourgeois said. “This can help them get an idea of that.”

Getting the impact of local levees in federal flood maps is an ongoing effort, Dupre noted.

The maps can be found at  
<http://noaa.maps.arcgis.com/apps/StorytellingTextLegend/index.html?appid=b1a20ab5eec149058bafc059635a82ee>.

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Thursday, November 20, 2014

# VICTORIA ADVOCATE

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## Contractor identified in Alcoa plant incident



By Sara Sneath (/profiles/staff/ssneath/55/)

Nov. 19, 2014 at 10:51 p.m.

*Updated Nov. 20, 2014 at 4:27 a.m.*



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Jerry McClelland, 44, died from injuries he sustained while working at Alcoa's alumina manufacturing plant in Point Comfort on Tuesday.

McClelland worked for Turner Industries' Beaumont office, said Rick Scardina, the company's chief administrative officer .

"We're working with Alcoa and (Mine Safety and Health Administration) in their investigation," Scardina said.


At 12:40 p.m. McClelland was struck by a tank door that was being installed with a crane, Amy Louviere, spokeswoman for Mine Safety and Health Administration, wrote in an email Tuesday.





The contract supervisor died from his injuries at Memorial Medical Center in Port Lavaca.


An administration inspector was on site when the incident happened, and investigators were dispatched to the plant.

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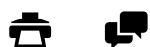
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## Local

# CBS 11 I-Team Looks At What's In Your Water Tower

November 19, 2014 10:00 PM

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**Ginger Allen**

Ginger is the Senior Investigative Reporter of the CB... [Read More](#)

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**DALLAS (CBS 11 NEWS)** - You most likely don't know Ron Perrin. But next time you pour a glass of tap water, you might consider giving him and his crew a toast.

Why? Because they work to keep your water clean, as they don diving suits, strap on air masks, and jump into water towers across North Texas, scooping out bacterial sediment that sinks to the bottom of the tank after time.

While no problems have been reported here, dirty tap water from bacterial sediment has been linked to hundreds of people getting sick in Colorado. And some people have died in Missouri, according to reports.

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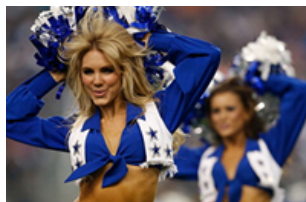




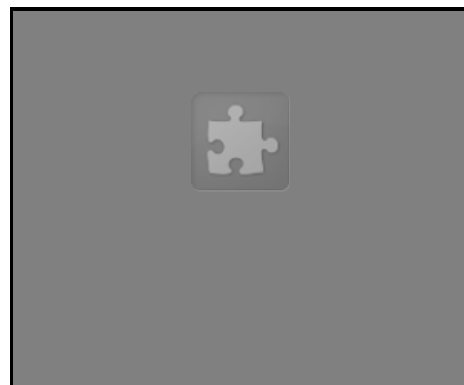
Musicians Then And Now II



Missing Summer?



Cowboys Cheerleaders



The Environmental Protection Agency is taking notice. During a conference last month, the EPA shared pictures of water towers with improper hatches and vents, allowing mice, snakes, birds and even feces into the water.

And in North Texas, "we see wasps, geckos, lizards" in water towers, one of Perrin's divers told CBS 11 News.

CBS 11's I-Team was there when Perrin's crew climbed up a water tower ladder, more than three stories high, in Everman and dove in, using a powerful vacuum to suck up a quarter-inch of sediment that had floated to the floor of the massive tank.

"If the sediment has built up, it's a threat," Perrin said.

But the Everman job was easier than some, he said, recalling: "We've seen one North Texas town that had six feet of sediment in a water tower than was smaller than this."

"Sediment can be a home to opportunistic pathogens and if we remove that we are removing a potential hazard that can affect us later," Perrin told the I-Team.

The I-Team has found that while annual inspections are required by state law, cleanings are not. The EPA and the non-profit industry group, American Water Works Association, recommend cleaning towers every three to five years. But, the I-Team's data shows not every city is doing that.

The CBS 11 I-Team checked with more than 40 cities in North Texas.

Officials in Plano and Grapevine say water towers there haven't been cleaned in five years. Benbrook has one tower that hasn't been cleaned in seven years, according to officials in those cities.

Keller, North Richland Hills and Rockwall each have towers that haven't been cleaned in the past nine years, officials in those respective cities told the I-Team. And some towers in Richardson, McKinney, Euless, Cleburne and Azle haven't been cleaned in 10 years, according to records in each of those cities.

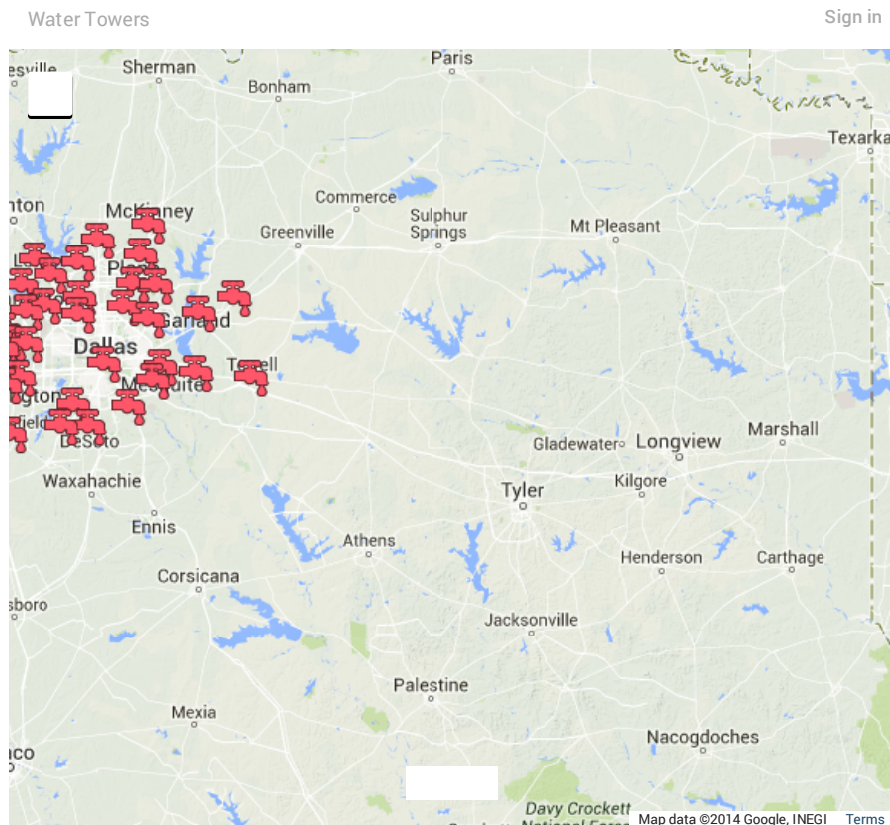
In Highland Village, one water tower hasn't been cleaned in 11 years. Frisco and Terrell reported having a water tower that hasn't been cleaned in 15 years. Meanwhile, officials in Weatherford say there are two water towers that haven't been cleaned since 1992.

Each city, however, said they inspect their water towers annually, including testing water quality and maintaining the right amount of chlorine to fight bacteria. They said they conduct an internal cleaning if an inspection finds that it's needed.

In its hearing last month, the EPA discussed whether water tower inspections and cleanings should be mandated nationwide. [If you'd like to add your input, click here to email the agency.](#)

The Cadmus Group is a research group collecting information for the EPA. A spokesperson with the EPA told the I-Team, "The... subsequent opportunity to submit comments are intended to collect more data and information about the frequency of distribution system water storage facility inspection and cleaning and the need for more or better risk management approaches. At this time, EPA is analyzing the information and comments received to determine what the next steps will be."

In addition, the I-Team has an interactive map that shows when water towers close to you have been cleaned.



[View Larger Map](#)

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**daboyisin** • 11 hours ago

What are underground water storage facilities like on Algonquin Dr. ( Dallas Water Utilities "Lake June Pump Station") used for ? Does this area NOT have water tower storage?

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# Does Texas Need a Carbon Tax to Meet EPA Climate Rules?



Or maybe  
just a new  
take on  
energy  
efficiency?

[Katherine Tweed](#)  
November 20, 2014

The Texas grid has (mostly) kept the lights on despite having minimal reserve margins for years. But if ERCOT, which operates the state's grid, implements the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's proposed Clean Power Plan to cut carbon dioxide emissions, it will reduce grid reliability in the state even further, according to a new analysis from the council.

"The timing and scale of the expected changes needed to reach the CO<sub>2</sub> emission goals could have a harmful impact on reliability," ERCOT wrote in its assessment. "It is unknown based on the information currently available whether compliance with the proposed rule can be achieved within applicable reliability criteria and with the current market design."

The EPA has put Texas's power-sector CO<sub>2</sub> emissions at about 223 million metric tons, with an emission rate of 1,298 pounds per megawatt-hour. The EPA has proposed that Texas lower its



emission rate to 791 lb./MWh by 2030.

The modeling examined various scenarios, two of which involved a price on CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. A price of \$20 per ton of CO<sub>2</sub> did not allow ERCOT to meet either the interim or the final goal, but \$25/ton would bring Texas below the interim goal and close to the final goal by 2030.

The EPA has assumed that Texas could reach a cumulative energy efficiency savings of nearly 10 percent by 2029 as part of meeting the goals, but ERCOT assumed a growth in energy efficiency of only 5 percent. "ERCOT did not elect to use the energy efficiency savings level estimated by EPA because this level of energy efficiency is not consistent with current trends in energy efficiency in Texas," the report states.

ERCOT took a similar stance to the Midwest Independent System Operator (which also relies heavily on coal), of "moderate, more realistic" energy efficiency growth assumptions. But that doesn't mean that more aggressive efficiency measures could not be implemented.

"ERCOT appears to have looked at growing *existing* energy efficiency programs, rather than the full-scale of what Texas could achieve under the CPP," Jim Marston, director of the Environmental Defense Fund's Texas office, wrote in a blog post. "Energy efficiency, one of the main building blocks in the CPP, is the best means to lower electricity prices for Texans." Marston pointed to a Brattle Group evaluation that found for every \$1 in energy efficiency investment, Texas could save \$2 to \$5.

Earlier this year, Texas launched its "PACE in a Box" program, which is designed to unlock efficiency measures across Texas - particularly in heavy industry, which uses half of the energy consumed in the state. Also, ERCOT has already raised its market cap to \$5,000 per megawatt-hour, and that will rise again to top out at \$9,000 per megawatt-hour in 2015. The higher prices during peak times could incentivize more big energy users to participate in demand response or invest in efficiency upgrades.

But to really get anywhere near the EPA rules, Texas will have to retire coal, and lots of it. A total of 800 megawatts of coal is already slated to retire, but to meet the EPA regulations, the state will need to retire between 3,300 and 8,700 megawatts of coal. Models devised by both ERCOT and EPA showed that up to 9,000 megawatts of coal could be retired.

With gigawatts' worth of coal taken out of the picture, ERCOT found its reserve margins would be 2 percent to 3 percent lower than its baseline of nearly 14 percent. It also questioned where reliability services, including reactive power and voltage support, frequency response, and ramping capability, would come from.

But other resources could provide many of these services, and some could even be better at it than coal. Storage assets, such as grid batteries or even EV fleets, can provide frequency regulation. Ramping capability would need to be faster, especially to contend with solar and wind dying down in the evening hours, but that too could be provided by alternative resources. ERCOT is also changing its ancillary service market to better match the needs of increasingly distributed generation, which could mitigate the impact of retiring coal.

"The small relative size of the ERCOT market in relation to the Eastern and Western Interconnections has contributed to greater variability in frequency, creating a greater need for abundant operating reserves," said Ben Kellison, director of grid research at GTM Research. "However, that need is increasingly being filled in other markets by distributed energy resources, most notably energy storage in the PJM market."

Kellison added that the changes to the ERCOT ancillary services market "create some optimism around growing mid-term opportunities for distributed generation, storage and demand side management." ERCOT already has a pilot underway in which grid batteries and an electric vehicle fleet provide frequency regulation.

Grid balancing is just one issue of reliability, however. ERCOT also anticipates that its Competitive Renewable Energy Zones transmission project, which was recently completed, will not provide enough transmission capacity for new renewable generation -- most of which will likely be solar -- even though CREZ currently has extra capacity.

Even without the cost of new transmission, some of which is already planned, bills could increase by up to 20 percent for customers in the short term, though that level is likely to fall to only 5 percent to 7 percent by 2029, according to ERCOT. But a recent Natural Resources Defense Council analysis found that the EPA's assumptions about the costs of renewables and efficiency are too conservative and not in line with current costs. As such, the cost to implement the Clean Power Plan is actually lower than the EPA and many states are estimating.

ERCOT is asking the EPA to take grid reliability issues into account for its planning to meet Clean Power Plan goals, particularly in the short term. A full report on the regulatory impact of the EPA rules in Texas is expected before the end of the year.

TAGS: ancillary services, carbon tax, clean power plan, epa, ercot, grid balancing

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## Texas ranchers claim EPA's plan to redefine 'navigable waters' will hurt cattle industry

November 19, 2014 2:21 PM

By MARILYN TENNISSEN

In a state where cattle is king, a ranchers' association is voicing its opposition to federal guidelines it says would hurt the cattle business.

The Texas and Southwestern Cattle Raisers Association has sent a letter to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers objecting to the proposed definition of "Waters of the United States."

As the *Southeast Texas Record* has [previously reported](#), under the regulations proposed by the EPA and Army, the definition of "navigable waters" will include ponds on private property, stock tanks and dry ditches.

The TSCRA submitted a letter to the federal organizations on Nov. 14, outlining what it claims are problems with the proposal.

"The proposed rule will have a significant detrimental impact to the U.S. cattle industry as it entails new regulatory requirements on cattle producers," wrote Pete Bonds, president of the TSCRA. "Further, it does not comply with limitations articulated by United States Supreme Court decisions, and overall usurps the federalism concept underpinning the Clean Water Act (CWA) when passed by Congress in 1972."



Bonds

"As a cattle rancher and landowner, the EPA water rule proposal causes me a great deal of concern," said Bonds in a press release. "If implemented the federal government would have control over all water in the U.S., clear down to the water that falls off the brim of my hat when it rains."

In its 28-page letter, the TSCRA asserts the proposed rule expands the federal government's jurisdiction beyond the authority of the Clean Water Act.

"The proposed rule would expand the authority of the agencies to cover thousands, if not millions, of new features through the agencies' use of broad and ambiguous language, making it a limitless expansion of authority that cannot be supported by the CWA or the Commerce Clause of the U.S. Constitution," the letter states.

The group claims the rule goes even further to expand EPA's authority to not only water, but also ditches and man-made conveyances that could hold water. "Additionally, it would require landowners to obtain costly permits to apply pesticides, graze cattle, conduct construction projects and perform other routine maintenance on their land. These permits can take up to a year to receive," Bonds claims.

Bonds writes that the new definition of "waters of the United States" would include isolated wetlands in pastures, and encompasses "virtually all artificial stock ponds west of the Mississippi River."

According to his letter, a dry ditch could be a "water of the U.S." under the proposed definition if it flows once per year but drains to a jurisdictional creek.

"Is it truly the agencies' intent to capture all ditches that ever drain to a larger ditch that then drains to a creek or other water the agency defines as TNW (Traditional Navigable Waters)? If not, the agencies should make that clear."

Bonds emphasized that making ditches a jurisdictional feature "would cripple the production of food" and require permits to conduct routine farming and ranching activities.

The ranching association claims the proposed rule would "obliterate the rights of states" under the Clean Water Act and the Constitution, and "tramples on the private property rights of livestock producers."

“TSCRA believes this proposed rule goes so far as to cover virtually every piece of dry land across the country through one way or another, depriving land owners of the use and enjoyment of their land and severely impacting their ability to make a living off of it,” the letter states.

The group also argues that there are a “vast number of missing pieces” in the proposed rule and the rulemaking process that is preventing a public comment period.

In conclusion, Bonds writes that the TSCRA “strongly urges” the agencies to withdraw the proposed rule

“This rule amounts to the largest land grab in history and would not be good for the cattle industry or the landowners in our country. I hope the EPA and Army Corps of Engineers will take our comments into serious consideration and realize the detrimental impact this proposal could have on our important industry if it is implemented,” Bonds said in a press release.

This entry was posted in Environment, Federal Court, Issues, National News, News and tagged Clean Water Act, Environmental Protection Agency, navigable waters, Pete Bonds, Texas and Southwestern Cattle Raisers Association, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Bookmark the permalink.

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